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Dated 21 July 2003



1/77

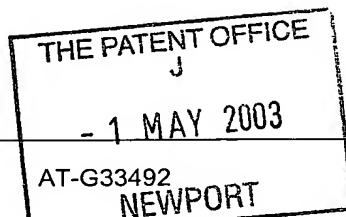
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P01/7700 0.00-0309989.2

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The Patent Office

Cardiff Road
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NP10 8QQ



1. Your reference

2. Patent application number

(The Patent Office will fill in this part)

0309989.2

1 MAY 2003

3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant (underline all surnames)

Terry Miller Associates
Sute 200
14 North Third Street
Lafayette
IN 47901-1205

Patents ADP number (*if you know it*)

If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation

U.S.A

INDIANA

835 216 3002

4. Title of the invention

Apparatus for Playing a Game and Method of Use thereof

5. Name of your agent (*if you have one*)

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent (*including the postcode*)

Bailey Walsh & Co
5 York Place
Leeds
LS1 2SD

Patents ADP number (*if you know it*)

224001

6. If you are declaring priority from one or more earlier patent applications, give the country and the date of filing of the or of each of these earlier applications and (*if you know it*) the or each application number

Country

Priority application number
(*if you know it*)

Date of filing
(*day / month / year*)

7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application

Number of earlier application

Date of filing
(*day / month / year*)

8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent required in support of this request? (*Answer 'Yes' if:*

- a) any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or
- b) there is an inventor who is not named as an applicant, or
- c) any named applicant is a corporate body.

See note (d))

Yes

Patents Form 1/77

9. Enter the number of sheets for any of the following items you are filing with this form. Do not count copies of the same document

Continuation sheets of this form

Description

11

Claim(s)

Abstract

Drawing(s)

4

10. If you are also filing any of the following, state how many against each item.

Priority documents

Translations of priority documents

Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent (*Patents Form 7/77*)

Request for preliminary examination and search (*Patents Form 9/77*)

Request for substantive examination (*Patents Form 10/77*)

Any other documents
(*please specify*)

11.

I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature

Date



30.04.03

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom

A Tomkinson
0113 243 3824

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Apparatus for Playing a Game and Method of Use thereof

The present invention relates to apparatus for playing a game and a method of use thereof.

There exists a large range of board games currently on the market. Many of these games include a play surface or play base on which one or more user's or players endeavour to get their play piece or marker from a start point to an end point before any of the other players. A number of squares or playing positions are provided between the start and end points and each player typically has to move between the squares or playing positions on their journey between the start and end points. A plurality of possible obstacles, actions and/or events can take place on this journey to add greater interest to the user. A common feature of these games is that in order for a user to move between play positions or identify a particular action or question which they have to undertake or answer, the user either moves through the play positions sequentially or throws dice to determine the number of play positions the user can move over.

A problem with these games is that they often follow a similar theme, are predictable and can be of only limited interest to the user, particularly when the user is a child.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide apparatus for playing a game and a method of use thereof which provides greater interest and intrigue to a user.

According to a first aspect of the present invention there is provided apparatus for playing a game, said apparatus including a play base and at least a first member located a pre-determined spaced distance apart from at least a part of said play base and movable relative thereto, the movement or at least the result of

the movement of said at least first member relating to one or more pre-determined criteria for allowing further playing of the game according to a set of rules.

The movement of the first member a distance apart, and typically above, the surface of the play base provides the user or users of the game with greater interest and provides a certain unpredictability compared to conventional board games, such as games which rely on the throwing of dice to allow progress of the game.

Whilst the following description refers to advantages of the present invention over conventional games, such as board games requiring the use of dice, it will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that the game apparatus according to the present invention can include, in addition the at least one movable member, any other conventional game components, such as dice.

Preferably the apparatus includes a frame and the at least first movable member is pivotally mounted on the frame to allow movement relative to said frame and/or play base in use.

In one embodiment the frame is typically mounted on the play base. The frame can be integrally formed with the play base or detachably attached thereto, thereby allowing easy dismantling of the game for storage and/or transport.

Preferably the at least first member is in the form of a pendulum. The pendulum typically includes an elongate portion having a first end attached to a pivot point and a second end attached to a weight or toy. The weight or toy is freely rotatable relative to an outer or upper surface of the play base. The

weight can be any object which can be made to move in a pendulum like manner when swung.

The weight or toy of the pendulum is typically located a pre-determined distance apart from the surface of the play base.

The elongate portion can be flexible or substantially rigid but in a preferred embodiment the elongate portion is in the form of a flexible string or cord.

In one embodiment the weight or toy is formed from or includes at least one magnet therein. At least one further magnet is provided in, under or on the play base. The pre-determined distance by which the weight or toy is spaced from the play base is such so that there is an interaction between the magnetic fields of the respective magnets whilst allowing free rotation the weight/toy above the play base without obstruction with the play base.

Preferably the polarities of the at least one magnet and the at least one further magnet are arranged so that the magnets are either repulsed and/or attracted to each other.

In one embodiment a plurality of magnets are provided in association with the play base. As such, when the pendulum is swung or the first member is moved by a user, the movement of the magnet(s) in or forming a whole or part of the pendulum determines is determined, at least in part, by the polarities of the magnets on the play base relative to the polarity of the magnet(s) in the first member.

Preferably the polarities of the magnets on the play base differ (i.e. both positive and negative polarity magnets are provided), thereby resulting in the toy or weight moving in what appears to

be an erratic manner as it encounters magnetic fields of different or the same polarity. The toy or weight will typically eventually come to rest after movement at a particular position. This position may be adjacent a magnet of opposite polarity to the toy or weight or a position remote from the interaction of the magnetic fields of the magnets.

In a preferred embodiment, the weight or toy is provided with at least one magnet of positive polarity and the play base has, in one example, five magnets of negative polarity and three magnets of positive polarity.

A compartment is typically provided in, on or adjacent the play base to house the one or more further magnets therein. Since the user is unable to see the magnets, the movement of the at least first member relative to the play base appears to be by magic. The intrigue of the game is further enhanced since the at least first member may come to rest at an acute angle to the vertical and the means by which this can occur will not be immediately apparent to the user.

Preferably the play base is provided with a plurality of play positions thereon which a user is required to move between using a play piece or to select a play piece by some means, thereby resulting in a particular event or events being undertaken or question(s) being asked.

In one embodiment the one or more further magnets are associated with one or more of the plurality of play positions.

Preferably the portion of the playbase or compartment housing the further one or more magnets is movable relative to the remainder of the playbase by chance, user choice or by design. As such, the game does not become predictable as a result of the

at least first member coming to rest at or adjacent the same play positions in use.

For example; the portion or compartment of the playbase housing the one or more further magnets can be rotatably mounted on the play base

In one embodiment the one or more further magnets are arranged around the circumference of a circle. The size of the circle and the distance between the magnets and the end of the at least first member typically depends on any or any combination of the power, polarity or gauss of the magnets. However, it will be appreciated that the magnets can be arranged in any required configuration.

The toy or weight can be provided in any required shape or design as required. For example, the toy can be in the form of a cartoon character, person, action hero and/or the like.

According to a second aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of using apparatus to play a game, said apparatus including a play base and at least a first member located a pre-determined spaced distance apart from at least a part of said play base, said method including the steps of a user moving said at least first member relative to said play base, the movement or at least the result of the movement of said at least first member relating to one or more pre-determined criteria for allowing further playing of the game according to a set of rules by the user or one or more further users.

According to a yet further aspect of the present invention there is provided apparatus for playing a game, said apparatus including a play base and at least a first member located a pre-determined spaced distance apart from at least a part of said

play base, one or more playing positions identified on said play base and one or more playing pieces for movement between said playing positions, and wherein the movement of the at least first member relates to one or more pre-determined criteria for allowing movement of the one or more playing pieces between the playing positions according to a set of rules.

According to a further aspect of the present invention there is provided apparatus for playing a game, said apparatus including a play base having first magnetic means located a pre-determined distance apart from at least a part of said play base and movable relative thereto, said play base having further magnetic means associated therewith and the magnetic interaction of said first and further magnetic means determining the movement of the first magnetic means relative to the play base surface.

Embodiments of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying figures, wherein:

Figure 1 is an example of game apparatus according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a detailed illustration showing the arrangements of magnets in a play base of game apparatus in one example with the upper surface of the play surface removed;

Figure 3 is a detailed view of the frame and pendulum connection according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 4 is a view of the frame and pendulum connection according to an alternative embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 5 is a detailed view of a toy pendulum in one embodiment of the present invention; and

Figure 6 illustrates an example of the game apparatus according to an alternative embodiment of the present invention.

Referring firstly to figure 1, there is illustrated apparatus 2 for playing a game according to one embodiment of the present invention. The apparatus 2 includes a play surface 4, a frame 6 attached to play surface 4, a pendulum 8 attached to frame 6 and one or more play pieces 10 for moving across the play surface.

Frame 6 includes four arm members 18, each having a first end 19 located at spaced apart intervals on play surface 4 and a second end 20 located above first end 19. The second ends 20 of arm members 18 are joined together.

Pendulum 8 is suspended from a point 21 adjacent ends 20 of arm members 18 and comprises a length of string 22 with a weight 24 attached to free end 26 thereof. The pendulum 8 is positioned such that a gap exists between the bottom 28 of weight 24 and the upper surface 30 of the play surface, thereby allowing weight 24 to freely pivot about point 21 without contact being made between weight 24 and surface 30.

In accordance with the present invention a portion 12 of the play surface is provided with a compartment 14 thereunder in which a plurality of magnets 16 are located (illustrated by dotted lines in figure 1), as shown in figure 2. The magnets 16 are arranged at spaced apart locations adjacent the periphery of compartment 14. The polarity of magnets 16 are alternately arranged such that a positive pole magnet 16' has a negative pole magnet 16'' adjacent either side thereof and vice versa.

Weight 24 includes a magnet 32 therein with a positive pole adjacent end 28. When the pendulum 8 is swung by a user, the positive pole magnet 32 interacts with the magnetic fields generated by magnets 16. Since the positive pole magnet 32 of weight 24 is attracted to negative pole magnets 16'' and repulsed by positive pole magnets 16' in compartment 14, the pendulum 8 appears to swing erratically across portion 12 of play surface 4. The pendulum eventually comes to rest adjacent a negative pole magnet 16'. Since the magnets 16 are hidden in compartment 14 and the user is therefore unaware of the magnets and the respective polarities, the pendulum appears to swing in an entirely random manner and appears to stop as if by magic in a position wherein the string and/or weight are, in one example, at an acute angle to the vertical relative to pivot point 21. Since the user would typically expect the pendulum to come to rest at a centre of portion 12 with the string in a vertical orientation, the angled position of the pendulum at rest is of increased interest to the user and adds to the intrigue of the game.

The weight 24 will typically have the potential to come to rest adjacent any of negative magnets 16' depending on the direction, size and angle of the force applied by the user to initially swing the pendulum. Although the magnets 16 are arranged around the circumference of a circular portion 12, it will be appreciated that the magnets can be located in any required arrangement, such as around the perimeter of a square or other shape, or spaced at any required location therewithin. In addition, the distance between adjacent magnets 16, the size of the gap between end 28 of weight 24 and the size of portion 12 can be varied as required and is typically dependent on the power and/or gauss of the magnets.

The upper surface of play surface 4 can be provided with one or more images, shapes, text or data thereon which correspond to possible play positions 34 between which play pieces 10 can be moved by one or more users according to rules for playing the game. These play positions can be provided on portion 12 corresponding approximately to positions of magnets 16, such that the resting position of pendulum 8 is adjacent a play position. In this arrangement, the resting position of the pendulum adjacent a particular play position can provide an indication to the user, for example, to undertake a particular action, to move their play piece 10 in a particular manner and/or the like. Alternatively, or in addition to, one or more play positions can be provided adjacent portion 12 at spaced locations on the remainder of play surface 4.

In order that the mechanism does not become predictable, portion 12 can be moved relative to the remainder of play surface 4, such that play positions 34 are not always adjacent the same polarity magnets. For example, portion 12 can be rotated relative to the remainder upper surface of the play surface 4. Portion 12 can be provided in a recess of play surface 4 and removable therefrom, can be integrally formed with the play surface and/or can simply sit in a pre-determined or marked out position on the upper surface of the play surface.

The ends 19 of arm members 18 can be detachably attached to the play surface 4. The resulting frame formed from arm members 18 can be balanced on play surface 4 or can be attached thereto by one or more clips, adhesive, VELCRO, screws, friction fit and/or the like.

Ends 20 of arm members 18 can be slotted into a number of channels 35 defined in a pivot member 36. String 22 of

pendulum 8 is typically attached to end 38 of pivot member 36 to form pivot point 21, as shown in figure 3.

In an alternative embodiment, frame 106 includes four substantially upright arm members 108, each located at four corners of a plate member 110, as shown in figure 4. Arm members 108 are each provided with a slot 112 therein for receiving a corner 114 of plate member 110 and supporting the same in use. A pendulum 116 is attached by string 118 at pivot point 120 on plate member 110. Pendulum 116 is freely rotatable about pivot point 120 as in figure 3.

The pendulum can be provided in any required design and can include any type of flexible or substantially rigid elongate member joined to a pivot point, such as a cord, string, or arm member formed from plastic, wood, board and/or metal. The toy or weight 24 can be provided in any required design and can be formed from magnetic material or have one or more magnets located therewith.

In the example in figure 5, a figure of an action hero, such as Spiderman, is provided as toy 202 at the free end of pendulum arm member 204. The upper play surface 206 can be provided with a plurality of designs 208 representing numbers thereon. The position of these numbers typically corresponds to the position of a plurality of magnets. In this arrangement, the resting position of the pendulum adjacent a particular number, typically corresponds to a number on a dice thrown during a conventional game, thereby representing a number of play positions between which the user is required to move their play piece on the play surface and/or the like. The remainder of the play surface 210 can be provided with a plurality of play positions 212 which represent a journey which one or more users have to move one or more play pieces along between a

start point and an end point, as shown in figure 6. The user reaching the end point of the game before any other user is typically the winner of the game.

It will be appreciated that the number, size and/or design of play pieces 10 and/or play positions 34 can be varied as required and can form a game when played in accordance with a predetermined set of rules. The present invention is not limited to the rules of the game or the type or number of play pieces but is directed to the use of a pendulum, the movement of which can be used in conjunction with other game pieces or game rules to provide a game.

11/03/2006

Figure

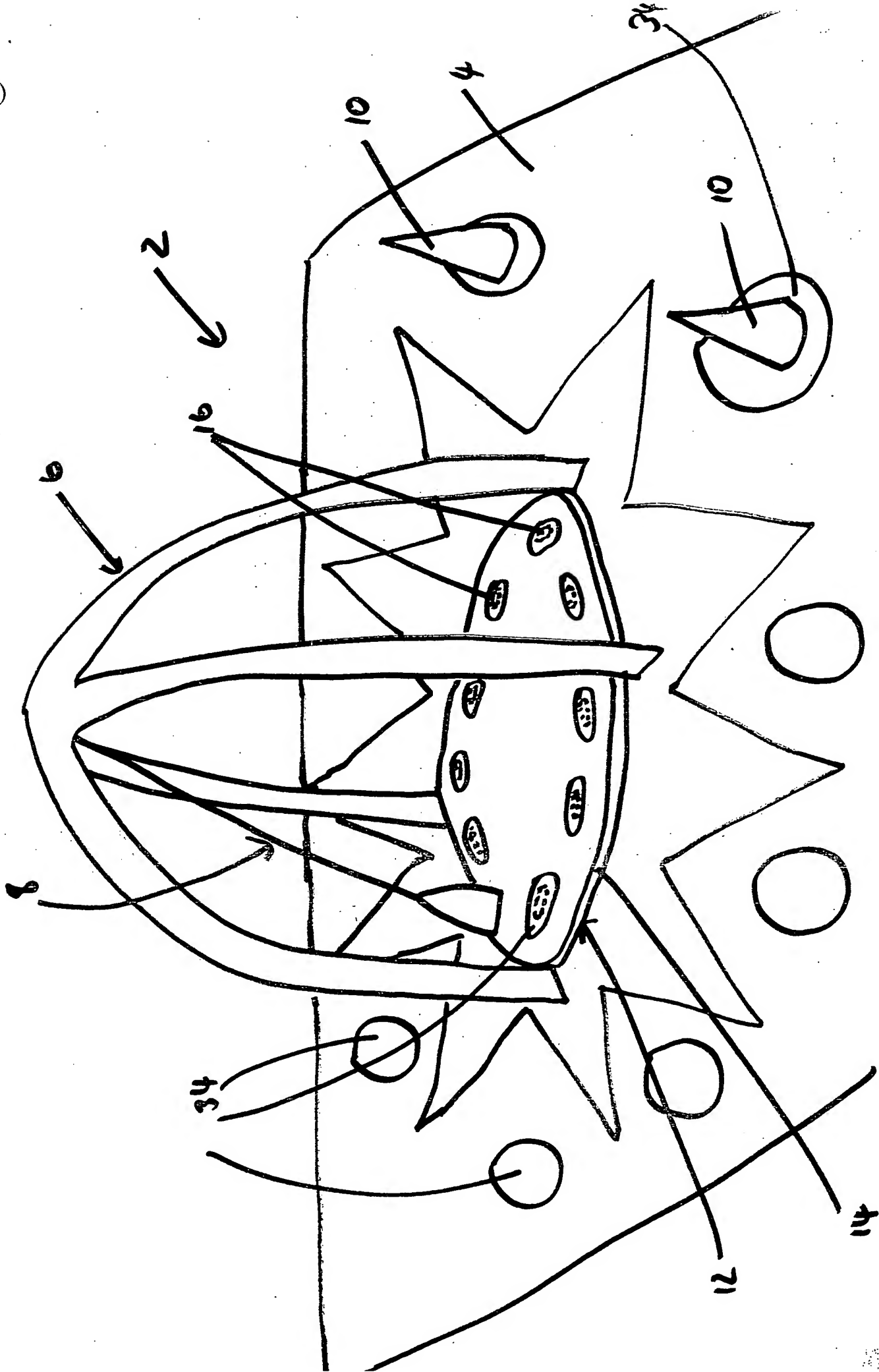


Figure 2

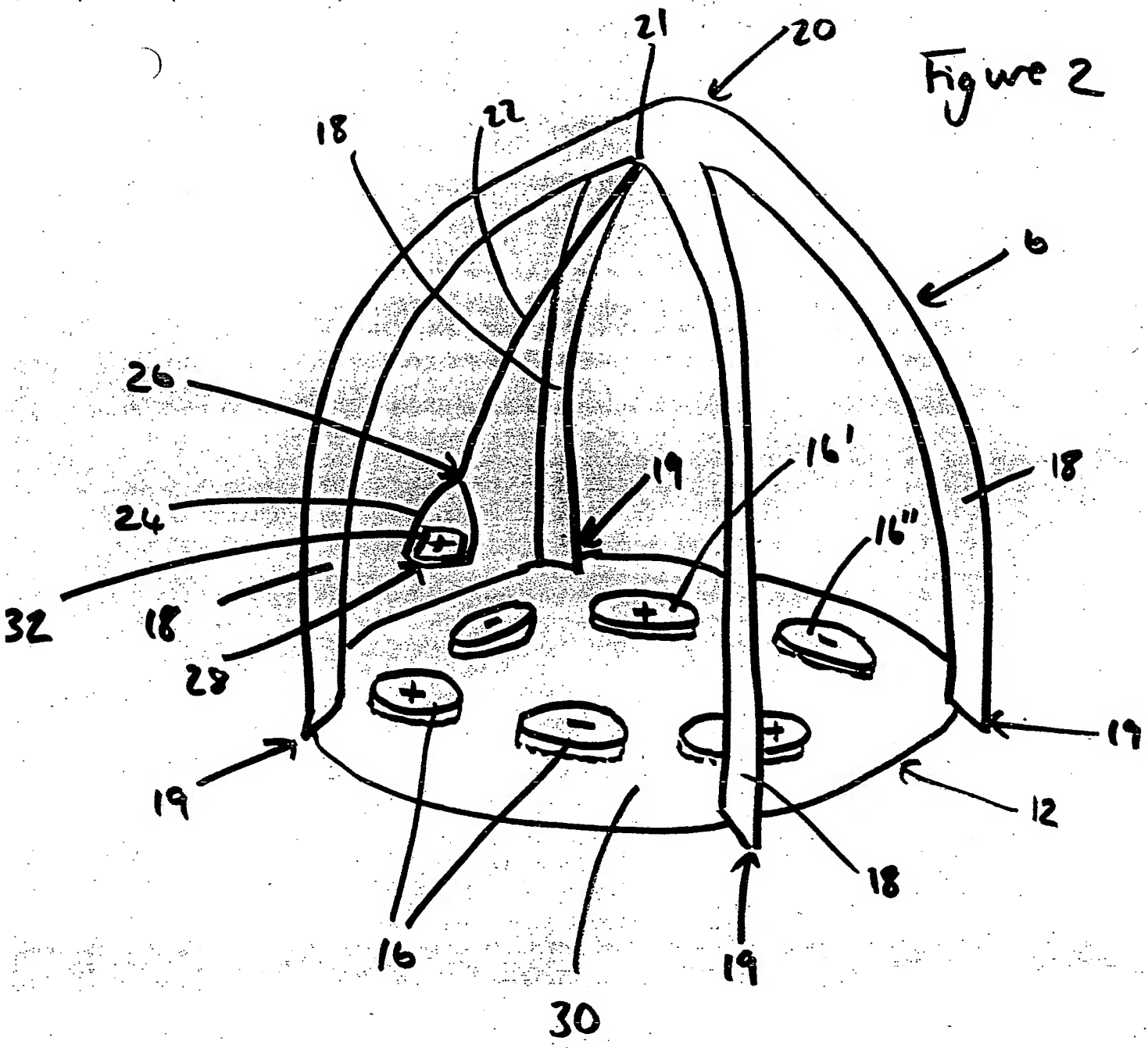


Figure 3

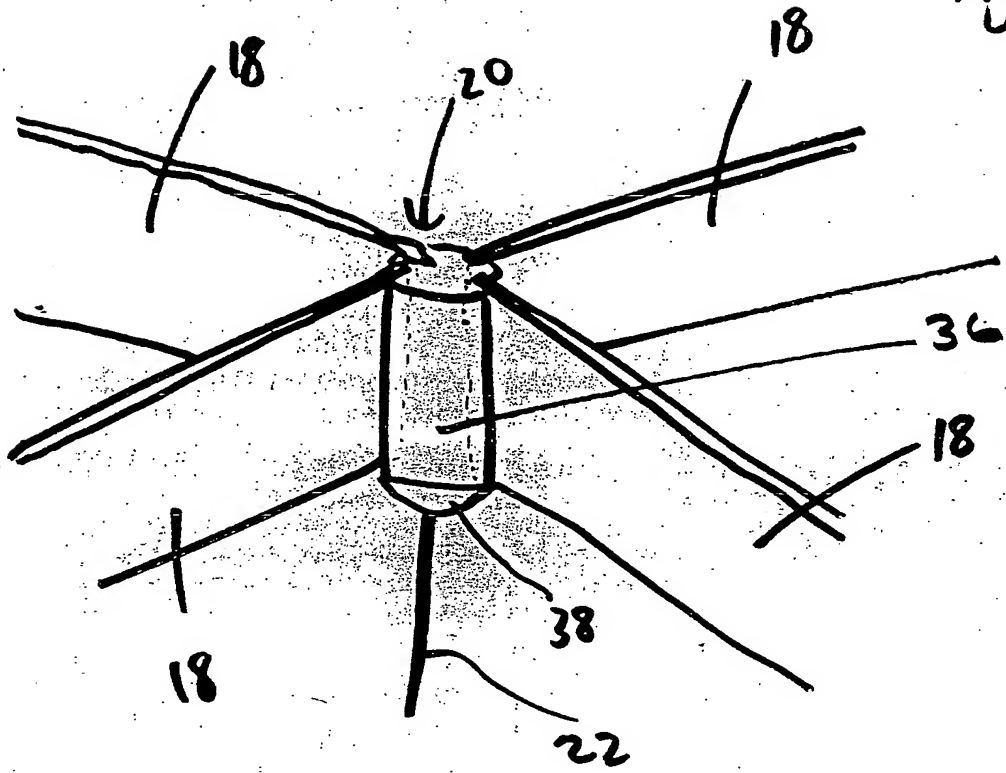


Figure 4

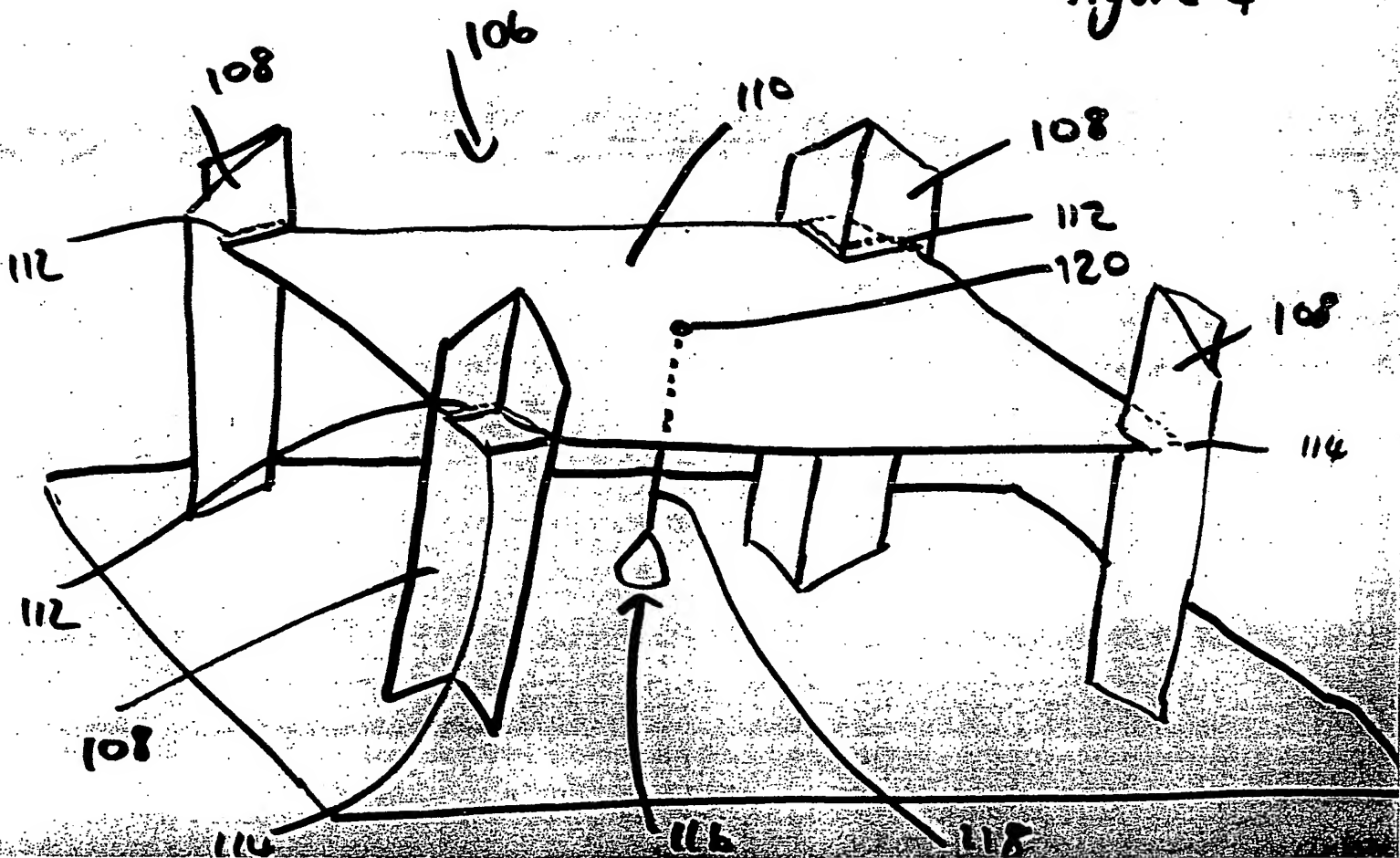


Figure 5

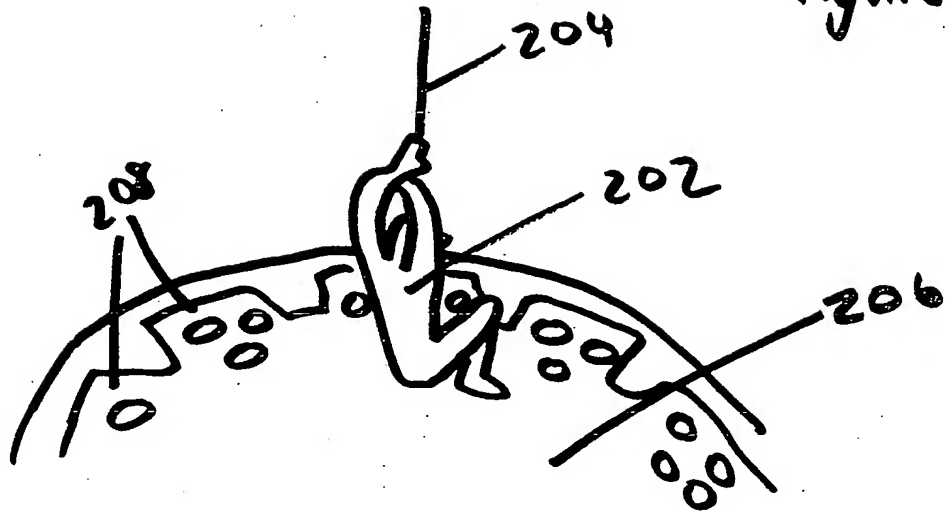


Figure 6

